

# **acts of on art and motherhood**

# **creation**

**19 April — 13 July 2025**

## **Exhibition Notes**

---

**DCA**  
Dundee Contemporary Arts

152 Nethergate  
Dundee, DD1 4DY  
01382 432444  
Scottish Charity No. SCO26631

Open Wed - Sun 11:00-18:00  
Open late Thu 19:00  
Admission free  
[www.dca.org.uk](http://www.dca.org.uk)

# **artists**

**felicity allen  
janine antoni  
cassie arnold  
bobby baker  
elina brotherus  
liesel burisch  
cathy cade  
lea cetera  
jai chuhan  
eileen cooper  
renee cox  
dorothy cross  
rineke dijstra  
nathalie djurberg  
and hans berg  
leni dothan  
marlene dumas  
catherine elwes  
tracey emin  
jessa fairbrother  
feministo  
fenix  
maeve gilmore  
anna grevenitis  
camille henrot  
susan hiller  
ghislaine howard  
elsa james  
chantal joffe  
claudette johnson  
mary kelly  
liss lafleur  
sally mann  
maternal fantasies  
mother art**

**lindsey mendick  
wangechi mutu  
ishbel myerscough  
catherine opie  
fani parali  
celia paul  
cathie pilkington  
polvo de gallina negra  
laure prouvost  
paula rego  
su richardson  
sister seven  
monica sjöö  
annegret soltau  
tabitha soren  
heather spears  
nancy spero  
hannah starkey  
emma talbot  
the hackney flashers  
mierle laderman ukeles  
valie export  
christine voge  
del lagrace volcano  
barbara walker  
caroline walker  
carrie mae weems  
nancy willis  
hermione wiltshire  
hermione wiltshire  
and clare bottomley  
carmen winant  
daphne wright  
billie zangewa**

# introduction to the exhibition

**Acts of Creation: On Art and Motherhood** plunges into the joys and heartaches, mess, myths and mishaps of motherhood through over 100 artworks, from the Women's Movement of the 1960s and 70s to the present day. While the Madonna and Child is one of the great subjects of European art, we rarely see art about real motherhood, in all its complexity. Featuring more than 60 artists, **Acts of Creation** addresses this blind spot in art history, asserting the artist mother as an important cultural figure.

How does the image of motherhood change when the artist is drawing on lived experience? What is made visible? What challenges are levelled at motherhood as an institution through which the mother is idealised as self-sacrificing, wholesome, tireless and uncomplaining?

Diverse experiences are explored across four thematic displays. **Creation** looks at conception, pregnancy, birth and nursing. It imagines motherhood as a creative act, albeit one in which joy might be tempered with anxiety, pain and exhaustion.

**Maintenance** is dedicated to the ongoing work of motherhood and caregiving in the day-to-day. Here we find artists engaged in domestic chores, keeping children safe, and navigating a balance between art and parenting.

In **Loss** artists reflect on experiences of miscarriage, adoption and involuntary childlessness. Works in this section also protest the loss of women's reproductive rights.

**The Temple** is a series of self-portraits in which artists explore their own identity in relation to motherhood. For decades women were told they could not be both an artist and a mother. These portraits stand in defiance of that idea.

Please speak to a member of our team for more information about the works on display and to hear about further events programmed in response to **Acts of Creation: On Art and Motherhood**.

Large print and audio versions of our exhibition information are available, please speak to a Visitor Assistant to find out more. You can scan the QR codes in the galleries to hear some of the artists talk about their work.

This exhibition features artworks that include nudity and explore childbirth, (in)fertility, miscarriage, abortion, loss and domestic abuse. Some of the films feature explicit language, nudity, racist language, graphic descriptions of some of the symptoms of Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS), and references to Alzheimer's.

## **about the curator**

Hettie Judah is a writer and curator. She is a regular contributor to *The Guardian*, *Frieze* and *The Times Literary Supplement*, and writes a monthly column for *Apollo* magazine.

Following the publication of her 2020 study on the impact of motherhood on artists' careers, in 2021 Judah worked with a group of artists to draw up the manifesto *How Not To Exclude Artist Parents*, which is now available in 16 languages. In 2022, together with Jo Harrison, Hettie co-founded the Art Working Parents Alliance, a supportive network and campaigning group for those working in the arts.

## **publication**

An accompanying publication by Hettie Judah is available. *Acts of Creation* is an engaging, thought-provoking and richly illustrated must-read on the evolving discourse on motherhood, offering a fresh perspective that challenges conventions and inspires change. It is available to purchase in DCA Shop.

## **information space**

Visit the Information Space next to the galleries to learn more about the exhibition. Here you will find a filmed interview with Hettie Judah, along with a selection of reading materials chosen by her which are listed on the next page.

## **quiet space**

We have created a Quiet Space next to the Information Space, where you can take time to pause. There is comfy seating and a calm environment for you to rest, take a deep breath and slow down for a while.

There are resources on local support and community groups, as well as information on spaces and activities for parents and carers in the area.

Designed in partnership with NHS Tayside.

## reading list

- *Acts of Creation: On Art and Motherhood*, Hettie Judah, 2024
- *Angels & Mechanics*, published by Deborah Law and Sandra Peaty, 1996
- *an Other A, B, C*, Melisandre Vaein
- *A Question of Balance: Artists and Writers on Motherhood*, Judith Pierce Rosenberg, 1995
- *Caroline Walker: Birth Reflections*, The Fitzrovia Chapel, 2022
- *Chiswick Women's Aid 1976-77*, Markéta Luskačová, 2020
- *Cook (Back in Hunger): A Mother's Menu*, Silvia Ziranek
- *Families We Choose: Lesbians, Gays, Kinship*, Kath Weston, 1991
- *If not a mother: Poems on infertility and childlessness*, edited and compiled by Clare Butler, 1994
- *Milk: An Intimate History of Breastfeeding*, Joanna Wolfarth, 2023
- *Milkyways*, Camille Henrot, 2023
- *Mother Art: A Collective of Women Artists*, Suzanne Siegel, Laura Silagi and Deborah Krall, 2011
- *Mother Art Prize*, produced by Procreate Project, 2020
- *Motherhood*, Ann Coxon, 2023
- *Mother Reader: Essential Writings on Motherhood*, edited by Moyra Davey, 2001
- *Mother Tongue* (Issue 3, Fall/Winter 2022/2023), edited by Melissa Goldstein and Natalia Rachlin
- *Pandemic Baby: Becoming a Parent in Lockdown*, Pia Bramley, 2021
- *Parallel Lines: Eileen Cooper*, Royal Academy of Arts, 2022
- *Queer Nursing (The Phasing System)*, Liesel Burisch, 2020
- *Re-Assembling Motherhood(s): On Radical Care and Collective Art as Feminist Practices*, edited by Sascia Bailer, Magdalena Kallenberger, Maicyra Leão Teles e Silva, 2021
- *Re:production: Parenthood & the art world*, Jill Skulina, 2022
- *Self-Portrait*, Celia Paul, 2019
- *Sorry I gave birth I disappeared but now I'm back*, Andi Galdi Vinko, 2022
- *The Care Manifesto: The Politics of Interdependence*, The Care Collective: Andreas Chatzidakis, Jamie Hakim, Jo Littler, Catherine Rottenberg, and Lynne Segal, 2020
- *The Disœuvre*, Felicity Allen, 2019
- *The Great Mother: Women, Maternity and Power in Art and Visual Culture 1900-2015*, Fondazione Nicola Trussardi, 2015
- *The Inextinguishable*, Melanie Jackson and Esther Leslie, 2020
- *The Second Shift*, Clare Gallagher, 2019

## **talks and events**

Unless otherwise stated, all events in the exhibitions programme are Donate What You Can. If you would like to donate to support DCA's artistic programme, please select a ticket option from £2-£8; otherwise please select £0 for a free ticket.

For more information and to book tickets visit [www.dca.org.uk](http://www.dca.org.uk)

### **Meet the Curator: Hettie Judah**

Fri 18 April, 18:00 - 19:00

Gallery 1

Please book in advance

Join us for an in-conversation event between *Acts of Creation: On Art and Motherhood* curator Hettie Judah and Beth Bate, DCA Director, where they'll discuss the development of the exhibition, the works that feature in the show, and the book that accompanies it.

### **In the Evening There is Feeling: Reading *Acts of Creation***

Thu 29 May, 18:00 - 19:30

Create Space

Please book in advance

*In the Evening There is Feeling* is DCA's reading group. It takes its name from Gertrude Stein's 1914 book *Tender Buttons* and focuses, in an informal and welcoming way, on texts from the worlds of art and literature.

In this session we will focus on Hettie Judah's book *Acts of Creation: On Art and Motherhood*, with a particular focus on the chapter 'The Artist As Mother'.

We will send you an excerpt of the chapter once you've booked your ticket. If you'd like to purchase a copy of the book, it is available in DCA Shop.

### **Caroline Walker: Women's Work Film Screening and Q&A**

Thu 3 July, 18:00 - 20:00

Cinema 2

£5.00

Please book in advance

*Women's Work* is a new documentary directed by Nicola Black, about internationally acclaimed artist Caroline Walker, who explores the diverse social, economic and cultural experiences of women living in contemporary society. From female tailors to midwives, from chambermaids to migrant workers, Walker paints the unseen, often underpaid work of women everywhere.

This screening is followed by a Q&A with Walker, Black, and DCA Director Beth Bate.

Based in Fife, Caroline Walker was born in Dunfermline, Scotland, where she now lives and works. Walker received a BA in Painting from Glasgow School of Art in 2004 and an MA in Painting from The Royal College of Art in 2009. Walker is represented in a number of major public collections, including National

Galleries of Scotland, Tate, the British Museum, and The UK Government Art Collection. She has featured in solo and group shows globally, including at Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester; Stephen Friedman Gallery, London; Ingleby Gallery, Edinburgh; Kunstmuseum, The Hague; Kunstpalast, Düsseldorf; and *British Art Show 9*.

Nicola Black is a BAFTA winning filmmaker with a passion for immersive documentaries exploring subjects through collaborative practice. With over 20 years experience making films across the spectrum of arts and culture, Black is drawn to stories that reflect contemporary conversation and narratives that resonate with what it means to be human at this particular moment in time.

## **curator's choice screenings**

Hettie Judah has programmed a trilogy of films written by Diablo Cody – *Juno*, *Young Adult* and *Tully* – all of which explore parenthood from a female perspective.

Judah says, “Whether in comedies or horror movies, mothers in cinema tend to fall into stereotypes – doting, ditzy, bawdy, nagging, neurotic, distant, toxic, unhinged. Portrayals rooted in women's lived experiences are rare indeed. I'm a great admirer of screenwriter Diablo Cody and the way she invites us to engage with complex emotion through sassy dialogue. She is incredibly funny, so her films read, superficially, as comedies, but they are driven by very relatable sadness, anger and frustration...”

Please see our website for prices and to book tickets.

### **Juno**

Tue 27 May, 18:00  
Cinema

When precocious teen Juno MacGuff becomes pregnant, she chooses a failed rock star and his wife to adopt her unborn child. Things then get more complicated when the prospective father begins viewing Juno as more than just the mother of his future child, putting both his marriage and the adoption in jeopardy.

A refreshingly candid coming-of-age comedy for which writer Diablo Cody

won a Best Original Screenplay Oscar, *Juno* addresses teenage pregnancy with great tenderness and subtlety through a smart and unconventional heroine played by Elliot Page.

Director: Jason Reitman / USA / Canada / 2007 / 1h 36m / 12A

### **Young Adult**

Wed 4 June, 20:30

Cinema

*Young Adult* is written by Diablo Cody and directed by Jason Reitman with Charlize Theron starring as the self-obsessed and shambolic Mavis Gary, a 37-year-old writer of young adult fiction.

Returning to her hometown to reclaim her ex-boyfriend (Patrick Wilson) despite the fact he is happily married with a new baby, Mavis creates a wave of emotional havoc in Cody's blackly comedic look at a woman in the grips of a mid-life crisis.

Director: Jason Reitman / USA / 2011 / 1h 34m / 15

### **Tully**

Mon 9 June, 18:00

Cinema

Charlize Theron stars as Marlo, an exhausted mother who is pregnant with their third, unplanned, baby. After being offered the gift of a night nanny, Tully (Mackenzie Davis) arrives and the exhausted Marlo's life changes in unexpected ways in this "hallucinatory ride through the sleep-deprived

months of early motherhood" – Hettie Judah.

Director: Jason Reitman / USA / Canada / 2018 / 1h 35m / 15

## **for younger visitors and families**

### **Create Space**

Tue - Sun, 11:00 - 18:00

Free, drop in

Children must always be accompanied by an adult

Create Space is a comfortable and imaginative space in which people of all ages can see, think, make and do together.

The space includes displays, child-safe materials and art activity sheets inspired by the current exhibition plus an invitation to display what you make on the wall.

Our art library for children is there for you to browse and the Play Box is a small, safe play space for very wee ones and their grown-ups.

Create Space is occasionally closed for workshops, please check the Family Calendar on our website for full opening hours. If Create Space is closed when you visit, you'll find a selection of activity sheets and materials on our Art Cart, located in the Information Space.



### **Bring a Baby Preview Tour**

Friday 18 April

10:30 - 11:30

Galleries

Donate What You Can, £0-£8

A pre-preview special tour for parents with babies (under 12 months) led by exhibition curator, Hettie Judah.

Join us for a relaxed walk around *Acts of Creation: On Art and Motherhood* with your babies and an opportunity to spend time in the exhibition with other parents. Our Create and Quiet Spaces will also be open for you to use.

### **Family Art Lab: Acts of Creation: On Art and Motherhood**

Sundays: 20 April, 18 May and 6 July, 11:00 - 13:00

Create Space

Donate What You Can (£0-£8)

Suitable for ages 3+ accompanied by an adult. Please book a ticket for everyone who is coming along, adults and children.

Join us for our Family Art Lab where we offer some relaxed time and space to get creative as a family. Come along for the start and introduction, then you can stay as long as you like or leave when you feel you need to.

We'll visit the galleries to look at one or two artworks in detail, then we'll have lots of different materials for you to paint and make together on the theme of mothers and what they make.

### **Bring a Baby: Stay and Play**

Wednesdays:

23 and 30 April; 7, 14, 21 and 28 May; 11, 18 and 25 June; 2 and 9 July

10:30 - 12:30

Create Space

Free, drop-in

A dedicated session to give parents and caregivers with babies and children under 3 a calm space to play and relax together. Our Create Space will be set up with baby friendly soft flooring and toys for your wee ones to explore.

Please note, this is a drop-in Stay and Play and not a workshop – if you want to make art together, take a look at our family sessions.

### **Relaxed Art Making**

Thu 8 May, 18:30 - 20:30

Free and drop-in

Create Space

Ages 16+

Join Tayside based artist and creative collaborator Gillian Adair in our Create Space for a special time carved out for parents and caregivers to respond to the works in *Acts of Creation: On Art and Motherhood*.

We'll have a range of art materials, and the time will be left open for you to create, reflect on and respond to the exhibition however you'd like, with Gillian on hand to help and guide you as required.

Please note, this time is designed for adults and is not a parent and child art session.

### **Hello in There Wee One Workshop**

Sun 11 May, 10:30 - 12:30

Create Space

Tickets: Donate What You Can (£0-£8)

Please book a ticket for everyone who is coming along

It's never too early to start getting to know your baby! Inspired by our book *Hello in There Wee One*, which is being given to all parents-to-be across Dundee, this workshop for expectant parents will encourage you to connect with your baby before they arrive through creative making and imagining.

We'll be drawing, making collage, printing and working with textiles, all led by an artist and art therapist. Absolutely no art experience is necessary, just come along and explore.

### **Family Make and Take Weaving Session with Cassie Arnold**

Thu 29 May, 16:30 - 17:30

Tickets: Donate What You Can (£0-£8)

Create Space

A certain kind of magic happens when adults can learn and create alongside children. Join us for an exciting weaving session with exhibition artist Cassie Arnold, where the whole family can take part. All materials, plus a healthy snack and drink are provided.

You'll receive hands-on instructions, plus a small booklet and loom you can take home so you can continue to create.

Cassie Arnold is a fibre artist and educator based in Texas who would love to introduce you to weaving together.

### **New Mothers as Writers**

Wed 4 June, 10:30 - 12:30

Donate What You Can, £0-£8

Create Space

Join Catrin Kemp for a creative writing workshop connected to *Acts of Creation: On Art and Motherhood*.

The workshop will offer the chance to spend two hours with other parents and carers of young children while looking at some of the fundamentals of putting words onto paper, using artworks from the exhibition as prompts. You do not need to have any previous writing experience, and your young children can attend with you.

Catrin Kemp is an award-winning creative producer, and Founder & Director of The New Mothers' Writing Circle: [www.newmumswriting.co.uk](http://www.newmumswriting.co.uk)

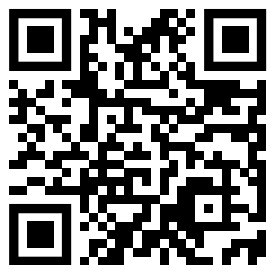
## **audio descriptions**

Listen to audio descriptions written by artist and visual describer Juliana Capes as she describes key works in the exhibition.

With more than 15 years' experience providing audio descriptions and interpretation for galleries across Scotland, Capes has developed a poetic and emotional describing style which expands on and illuminates artworks in new ways, particularly for audiences who are blind, have low vision or sensory impairments.

This audio tour will move through the exhibition, offering visual descriptions of selected artworks on display. Capes will spend time elaborating on the exhibition to encourage slow looking, listening and contemplation.

The tour is accessible on your own device through the Bloomberg Connects app and DCA's SoundCloud which you can access by scanning the QR code below.



## **bloomberg connects**

The Bloomberg Connects app is available for download from Google Play, the App Store, and via the QR codes at the entrances to our galleries. On it, alongside our content, you'll find free digital guides to cultural organisations around the world.

Offering a new way to explore our exhibitions programme, the app allows you to listen to our exhibition notes, watch exclusive artist interviews, and find out what's on.

Please see our website and the Bloomberg Connects app for further details. For assistance locating these recordings, please speak to one of our Visitor Assistants.

## **just ask**

Our friendly Visitor Assistants are always happy to help with your questions.

## **keep in touch**

Keep up to date with the very latest from DCA by visiting [www.dca.org.uk](http://www.dca.org.uk) or by following us on Facebook, Bluesky and Instagram.

Share your thoughts on the exhibition using **#helloDCA**.

# support dca

Our exhibitions are always free to access, but DCA is a charity and donations are welcome and appreciated. You can tap to donate at one of the contactless points in our building or donate online at [dca.org.uk/support/donate-to-dca](https://dca.org.uk/support/donate-to-dca)  
Thank you for your support!



This leaflet is printed on recycled paper. DCA is proud to be an Active Member of the Gallery Climate Coalition: for more information about our work to reduce carbon emissions, visit our website.



*Acts of Creation: On Art and Motherhood* is a Hayward Gallery Touring exhibition from Southbank Centre, London, curated by Hettie Judah. The exhibition opened at Arnolfini, Bristol and toured to Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham and Millennium Gallery, Sheffield, before coming to Dundee.

This exhibition has been made possible as a result of the Government Indemnity Scheme. Dundee Contemporary Arts and Hayward Gallery Touring would like to thank HM Government for providing indemnity and the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport and Arts Council England for arranging the indemnity.